

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A method of consumer to business referral managed by a service provider on behalf of consumers and manufacturers participating over a public network and accessing the service provider over the public network, the method comprising the following steps:

maintaining a manufacturer database including a plurality of manufacturer entries, each entry for a manufacturer in the manufacturer database including the manufacturer's identification, and for each retailer stocking any of the manufacturer's products, the retailer's identification and identification of the manufacturer's products stocked by the retailer;

maintaining a consumer database including a plurality of consumer entries, each entry for a consumer in the consumer database including the consumer's identification;

displaying products in the manufacturer database on the public network;

a consumer viewing the displayed products on the public network and selecting a referral product for referral ~~to refer~~ to a referred retailer;

receiving from the referring consumer over the public network a the referral product ~~referral~~, the referral product ~~referral~~ including a ~~the~~ referred product identification and a ~~the~~ referred retailer identification corresponding to the referred retailer;

searching the manufacturer database to determine whether the referred retailer already stocks the ~~referred~~ referral product;

searching the consumer database to determine whether a set number of consumers in the consumer database other than the referring consumer have already referred the ~~referred~~ referral product to the referred retailer;

including the referred product identification and the referred retailer identification in the entry for the referring consumer in the consumer database and informing the manufacturer of the referral of the referral product, if the referred retailer does not already stock the referred referral product and if ~~or~~ a set number of consumers in the consumer database ~~other than the referring consumer~~ have not already ~~referred~~ selected the referred referral product for referral to the referred retailer, otherwise not including the referred product identification and the referred retailer identification in the entry for the referring consumer in the consumer database and not informing the manufacturer of the referral of the referral product; and ~~informing the manufacturer of the referral of the product~~ if a sale is made by the manufacturer of the referral product to the referred retailer, then updating the manufacturer entry in the manufacturer database to indicate that the referred retailer stocks the referral product and rewarding the referring consumer with a reward, otherwise not updating the manufacturer entry in the manufacturer database to indicate that the referred retailer stocks the referral product and not rewarding the referring consumer with a reward.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the set number ~~of consumers in the consumer database other than the referring consumer~~ is one.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the set number ~~of consumers in the consumer database other than the referring consumer~~ is a set number greater than one.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein

maintaining a manufacturer database further comprises the following steps:

~~_____manufacturer registering on the service provider via the public network by providing manufacturer data including manufacturer's name, address and contact information;~~

~~_____creating a manufacturer entry in the manufacturer database for the manufacturer, the entry including the manufacturer data;~~

manufacturer uploading including in the manufacturer entry in the manufacturer database for each product manufactured by manufacturer,~~product information including a unique product number, a product description, pricing, and a referral policy;~~

~~_____including the product information in the manufacturer entry in the manufacturer database;~~

~~_____manufacturer uploading for each product, retailer information for retailers that stock the product including each retailer's name, address, and contact information; and~~

~~_____including the retailer information for each product in the manufacturer entry in the manufacturer database~~

wherein the referral policy comprises the set number and the reward for rewarding the referring consumer.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 8, wherein the step of maintaining a retailer database including a plurality of retailer entries further comprises the steps of:~~

A method of consumer to business referral managed by a service provider on behalf of consumers and manufacturers

participating over a public network and accessing the service provider over the public network, the method comprising the following steps:

maintaining a manufacturer database including a plurality of manufacturer entries, each entry for a manufacturer in the manufacturer database including the manufacturer's identification, the manufacturer's products, descriptions of the manufacturer's products, manufacturing representative information for each product, and for each retailer stocking any of the manufacturer's products, the retailer's identification and identification of the manufacturer's products stocked by the retailer;

maintaining a consumer database including a plurality of consumer entries, each entry for a consumer in the consumer database including the consumer's identification;

displaying products in the manufacturer database on the public network;

a consumer viewing the displayed products on the public network and selecting a referral product for referral to a referred retailer;

receiving from the referring consumer over the public network the referral product, the referral product including a referred product identification and a referred retailer identification corresponding to the referred retailer;

searching the manufacturer database to determine whether the referred retailer already stocks the referral product;

searching the consumer database to determine whether a set number of consumers in the consumer database other than the referring consumer have already selected the referral product for referral to the referred retailer;

including the referred product identification and the referred retailer identification in the entry for the referring consumer in the consumer database and informing the

manufacturer of the referral of the referral product, if the referred retailer does not already stock the referral product and if a set number of consumers in the consumer database have not already selected the referral product for referral to the referred retailer, otherwise not including the referred product identification and the referred retailer identification in the entry for the referring consumer in the consumer database and not informing the manufacturer of the referral of the referral product;

if a sale is made by the manufacturer of the referral product to the referred retailer, then updating the manufacturer entry in the manufacturer database to indicate that the referred retailer stocks the referral product and rewarding the referring consumer with a reward, otherwise not updating the manufacturer entry in the manufacturer database to indicate that the referred retailer stocks the referral product and not rewarding the referring consumer with a reward;

maintaining a retailer database including a plurality of retailer entries, each retailer entry containing data including the retailer name, address, contact information, products stocked by the retailer, and referral products referred to the retailer;

merging into a retailer entry in the retailer database for any retailer having the same retailer's identification in any entry in the manufacturer database, the products stocked by the retailer for any manufacturer in the manufacturer database; and

merging into the retailer entry in the retailer database for any retailer having the same retailer's identification in any entry in the consumer database, the referral products referred to the retailer by any consumer in the consumer database.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising

the steps of:

a manufacturer searching the retailer database to locate retailers not stocking the manufacturer's product.

11. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising the steps of:

the service provider searching the retailer database to locate retailers not stocking a manufacturer's product in the manufacturer database; and

the service provider emailing broadcasts of manufacturer's product information to retailers not stocking the manufacturer's product.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 9 ~~12~~, further comprising the steps of:

the service provider searching the manufacturer ~~representative~~ database to find a manufacturer representatives representative that represents ~~represent~~ products similar to a particular manufacturer's product in the manufacturer database by comparing the description of the particular product to the descriptions of other products in the manufacturing database by accessing the product descriptions in the manufacturer database; and

the service provider recommending the manufacturer representative to the manufacturer for representing the particular manufacturer's product.

15. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising the steps of:

comparing the products in a manufacturer entry in the

manufacturer database sold by the manufacturer to a selected retailer to all products stocked by another retailer in the retailer database by comparing the descriptions of the products sold to the selected retailer to the descriptions of the products stocked by the other retailer in the retailer database by accessing the product descriptions in the manufacturer database; and

recommending to the manufacturer to attempt to sell the products sold by the manufacturer to the selected retailer to the other retailer, if the comparison between the description of products sold by the manufacturer to the selected retailer and the description of all the products stocked by the other retailer passes a threshold value.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, further comprising the steps of:

repeating the steps of claim 15 for each retailer in the retailer database.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of:

repeating the steps of claims 15 and 16 for each retailer in the manufacturer entry in the manufacturer database.